Top 10 FOOD TRENDS

Home entertaining and cooking, mini luxuries, bold flavors, and food safety concerns take center stage for 2009 and beyond.

Economic downturns have long been a catalyst for new food behaviors and re-ordering product priorities, and this one is no exception. Factor in our dramatically changing demographics, a new era of conscious consumerism, an unprecedented level of culinary sophistication, and a re-centering of activities around the home—and it's clear that the food marketplace will never be the same. It is the intent of this article to identify—within the framework of a "Top 10 Food Trends" list—both what is going to be important to consumers in the short term and what trends and issues will likely be sustainable in the years ahead.

Current efforts by consumers to live within their means will cause some re-evaluation of their spending and core values longer-term. For example, the economy caused two-thirds (68%) of consumers to cut spending on nonessential grocery items; 59% bought fewer individual-serving packages, 55% purchased fewer prepared meals at grocery stores, and 55% opted for smaller quantities of favorite treats. In addition, 52% purchased fewer organic products, 42% gave up favorite brands, and 30% bought less fresh produce (IRI, 2008). Private label has become a way of life, with dollar sales climbing 10% across multiple channels to $82.9 billion in 2008 (Angrisani, 2009).

Consumers continue to cut back on restaurant visits, with 53% of consumers spending less money in restaurants in January 2009 than the year before (Mintel, 2009a). In 2008, quickservice was the only foodservice segment to post traffic gains (NPD, 2009).

It's not surprising then that in-home meals are now approaching the 25-year high of 1992 (NPD, 2008b). But as the most restaurant-spoiled, culinary-aware generation in history heads back into the kitchen, they'll demand ways to

BY A. ELIZABETH SLOAN

***Nearly one-third** of consumers grill year-round, and the backyard is a favorite spot for home entertaining.* Photo copyright © Justin Lightley/Getty Images prepare restaurant-quality foods that allow them to sample the world of flavors easily available through foodservice. This trend is spawning enormous markets for appetizers, snacks, barbecue rubs/sauces, gourmet foods, and alcoholic beverages.

With the exception of organic products, healthy foods appear to remain fairly bullet-proof during the current economic downturn. Only 17% of those living in households with incomes > $100,000 cut back on healthy items; 22% of those with household incomes of $55,000–$95,000 did so, as did 35% of those with incomes < $55,000 (IRI, 2008). Moreover, dietary supplements were the only healthcare category in food, drug, and mass channels including Wal-Mart (FDMW) to post a gain (up 5.8% in unit sales).

The demographics of the American public continue to shift. With one-third of the population already over age 55 and 31 million boomers turning age 65 over the next 10 years, the food preferences and health priorities of older Americans will move center stage, both in restaurants and at retail.

For the first time, the food industry will be faced with developing dual marketing strategies as the 72 million "gourmet everyday" Gen Yers enter the work force and their parenting years. With dramatically different food attitudes and behaviors than their boomer parents, they've already spawned the first generation of child "foodies" and will impose even stricter health restrictions on children's foods in the years to come.

Lastly, even the green machine is slowing down as the economic pressure begins to bear down. The number of Americans who say they almost always or regularly buy green products remains stagnant this year at 36% (Mintel, 2009b) after shooting up from 13% to 36% in 2008.

***Gourmè Mist* non-aerosol sprays** *can lightly coat sauté pans, dress up salads, and flavor veggies, fish, meats, and breads.* Photo courtesy of Gourmè Food Co.

1. Cooking Again!

Marketers that help today's demanding consumers conveniently prepare restaurant-quality foods and provide the diversity of flavors experienced outside the home will win them over. The stakes are high. In 2008, 242 meals per person were prepared and eaten at home, closing in on the 1992 figure of 249 meals (NPD, 2008b). Most important, consumer recessionary cooking behaviors are different this time, signaling a new direction is likely ahead.

Unlike the recession of the early 1990s when consumers turned to prepared meals and frozen entrees, 53% now report cooking from scratch more frequently, creating an increased demand for meal components (IRI, 2008). This time around, frozen poultry, plain vegetables, and side dishes are enjoying brisk sales, as are basic ingredients, including rice, breakfast meats, instant potatoes, spices/seasonings, shortening/oils, soups, and Italian sauces. Sales of frozen dinners/entrées fell 3.2% and refrigerated entrée sales were down 3.6% for the year ended (Y/E) 06/29/08.

Similarly, there is surging interest in convenience foods that *assist* (e.g., marinating sauces or rubs) vs those that completely *replace* home cooking (e.g., a frozen entrée or baking mix) (Hartman, 2008a). Moreover, *helper* products like *Gourmè Mist* non-aerosol sprays allow consumers to more easily vary flavors.

Consumers are also returning to one-dish meals, including casseroles, to stretch expensive proteins (York, 2009). Expect more slow and unattended cooking and greater use of crock pots, which are found in 83% of American kitchens, in order to better utilize less-expensive cuts of meat. With sales of cast iron skillets—especially those with celebrity chef endorsements—jumping 38% last year, more upscale skillet meals will also be in high demand (NPD, 2008c).

Three in 10 consumers (29%) report using food preparation products that they didn't use three months ago, led by food processors, choppers, juicers, slicers, steamers, and woks (IHA, 2008).

While consumers have traditionally reverted to comfort foods during difficult economic times, this time they're doing it with a twist. American regional foods are adding excitement to the comfort trend. Texas, New York-style, Southwestern, Southern-style, California, New England, Cajun-style, Boston-style, and Santa Fe are the top

"American" claims on menus (Mintel Menu Insights, 2009).

A great opportunity lies in teaching consumers how to cook. Four in 10 Americans (42%) know someone in "desperate need" of cooking skills (AEB, 2008). Only 27% of consumers feel their ability to select and prepare meat is as good as their mother's (AMI, 2009).

Pop-up timers, ripeness sensors, and cooking instructions on fresh meat/fish will become important product differentiators. On-line sites, television cooking shows, cooking magazines, and cooking classes are the new cooking resources. Only 40% of meal preparers use a recipe at least once a week (NPD, 2008c).

Lastly, with 67% of children ages 6–11 preparing some of their own meals at home and 93% of those 12–17 doing so, heat-and-eat foods with kid appeal have tremendous potential (Mintel, 2008a).

2. Homeward Bound

High entertainment costs, the in-home media center explosion, and a recent trend to home improvement have prompted 88% of Americans to say they're going to stay home more often, creating some very large and untapped new food and beverage opportunities (Blockbuster, 2008). Entertaining at home and grilling in the backyard rank right behind watching television, renting movies, and playing video games as the top entertainment activities Americans plan to increase (Blockbuster, 2008). Not surprisingly, the demand for creative, savory mini-morsels, appetizers, pop-able snacks, and gourmet chips/dips for movie munchies is unprecedented.

Nearly half (47%) of consumers have people over at least once a month, and one in five (18%) do so once a week (GfK, 2009). Young adults ages18–24 are the most likely to entertain at home, and do so five or more times per month (Mintel, 2008b). Nearly two-thirds (66%) of consumers offered snacks the last time they entertained at home. Simple is in as 31% of entertainers often have a potluck meal, 30% use convenient appliances (e.g., a slow cooker), and 27% serve take-out or prepared/microwaveable food (GfK, 2009; Sloan, 2009a).

One-third (33%) of adults order full meals or party platters at least once a month (Technomic, 2008a). Three-quarters (75%) of quickservice and 58% of fullservice restaurant operators expect to have higher catering sales in 2009. Party platters that feature ethnic fare more exotic than Mexican food as well as platters for children's parties are market opportunities.

Birthday parties and celebrations, which are strong motivators for gourmet cooking, are coming back home. More than one-third (36%) of consumers bought specialty/gourmet foods for a special occasion at home in 2008; 18% kept gourmet foods on hand for unexpected guests (Tanner, 2008). Pre-prepared fancy dinner entrees that go from freezer to table, gourmet appetizers such as Good Wives hors d'oeuvres, and celebration cake kits will find a welcome market.

The backyard is fast becoming Americans' new living room. Two-thirds (66%) of consumers would opt for a barbecue/cookout at home with family and friends vs eating out (HP&B Assn., 2008). Nearly one-third (31%) grill year-round (NPD, 2008c). With consumers' preference for a variety of different grilled foods and courses, pre-prepared grill-able appetizers, vegetables, and side dish options will be in high demand.

The NPD Group indicates that brown bagging has reached a seven-year high, with nearly 12% of lunches brought from home vs 11.3% last year (Prevor, 2008). While sandwiches are still the top component, 60% of carried lunches did not contain a homemade item (NPD, 2008b).

Sales of microwavable shelf-stable packaged dinners, led by Hormel *Compleats,* increased more

Good Wives prepared creations *such as these Spanakopita appetizers have applications as at-home cocktail-party fare.* Photo courtesy of Good Wives

than 22% in food, drug, and mass channels excluding Wal-Mart (FDMx) for Y/E 8/10/08; sales of ramen/Japanese noodle cups rose 8% (White-Sax, 2008).

3. Gourmetization

The level of culinary sophistication and interest in experimenting with new flavors, foods, and cuisines has never been higher than it is currently. In 2008, 37% of adults went to restaurants to try new cuisines, 29% for new flavors (Mintel, 2008c). On average, adults spend about 3.1 hours per week cooking for fun (GfK, 2009).

About half (53%) of adults are casual cooking enthusiasts who cook as a hobby. Serious cooking enthusiasts—who have chef-like skill levels—represent 16% of U.S. consumers (Mintel, 2008d).

Despite the economy, 56% of adults purchased specialty foods in 2008; 62% did so to treat themselves and 59% for everyday meals at home. Five categories—cold beverages, coffee, olive oils/specialty oils, cheese, and chocolate are purchased by more than half of specialty food consumers.

Two-thirds of specialty food consumers are cooking more at home due to the economy. Nearly six in 10 (59%) enjoy planning parties, and 86% say that family traditions are important to them (Tanner, 2008). Products like BelGioioso's *Unwrap & Roll* fresh mozzarella sheet, which allows consumers to easily make customized appetizers, help make the process easier.

Latin foods, as well as Peruvian, Argentinean, and Middle Eastern foods, are projected to gain in popularity, as are chimichurri, peri-peri, and arrabbiata sauces (Packaged Facts, 2009a). Aged and cured meats such as Iberian ham and proscitutto are getting unprecedented attention, as are Spanish, Portuguese, and Mexican cheeses.

Six in 10 (58%) of American Culinary Federation (ACF) chefs cited umami as a key culinary trend for 2009 (NRA, 2008). New/fabricated cuts of meat, e.g., Denver steak, pork flat iron, bone-in Tuscan veal chop, squab, Wagyu beef, and wild sockeye/king salmon are hot culinary trends for 2009 (NRA, 2008). Specialty oil blends, often infused with spices, herbs, or even nutrients, represent another new trend. Glazing and crusting continue to be favorites, e.g., Roland's *Blood Orange Balsamic Glaze*. McCormick's new *Seven Super Spices* and *Grilling Spices* are concentrated sources of antioxidants.

ACF chefs named durian, passionfruit, dragon fruit, and guava as the trendy exotic fruits in 2009; açai, goji berry, and mangosteeen remain their top superfruit choices (NRA, 2008). Persimmon, masala, starfruit, baobab, and cactus are also moving into the spotlight (Mintel, 2008e). Varietals are gaining in importance. Dulcinea Farms' *Extra Sweet Tuscan Style* cantaloupe is grown from special Italian seeds.

While American and European classics still dominate the soup market, expect Chinese favorites, Vietnamese Pho, and authentic Italian soups to move center stage. Japanese, U.S. Southern, Thai, and Chinese will be the next wave in gourmet salads (Mintel Menu Insights, 2009).

Also, watch for breakfast to take a gourmet turn. Ethnic-inspired breakfast items, e.g., Asian-flavored syrups, chorizo scrambled eggs, and coconut milk pancakes top the list of hot breakfast items for 2009. Most important, seafood, especially smoked salmon, oysters, and crab cakes, will be finding favor at the early morning daypart (NRA, 2008).

Stonemill Kitchens *refrigerated dips* *help bring gourmet, restaurant-quality appetizers into the home.*
Photo courtesy of Reser's Fine Foods

4. The New Pacesetters

America's 72 million Gen Y adults (ages 18–32)—now in the workforce and their parenting years—have become a food force to be reckoned with. Moreover, their unique food preferences and priorities will force food marketers into a dual marketing mode, squarely focused on younger vs older consumers.

With Gen Yers the most likely to cut back on restaurant visits and 10% more likely than any other group to say they prefer the taste of restaurant-prepared foods, they'll be relentless in finding ways to enjoy restaurant-style foods at home (GfK, 2009).

While half (54%) of those ages 18–29 say they don't know how to cook well, they're the group that most wants to eat gourmet every day and are the fastest-growing segment of serious cooks (GfK, 2009; Mintel, 2008d).

As this new generation redefines convenience foods, they'll place unprecedented emphasis on flavor flexibility, driving the demand for "helpers," e.g., spice rubs, simmering sauces, celebrity chef kits, sandwich sauces, and gourmet dinner mixes. Dulcet Cuisine's all-natural ketchups in *Peppery Moroccan, Mild Indian Curry*, and *Orange Chili* varieties are right on target.

Three-quarters (74%) of those ages 18–24 bought specialty foods in 2008 (Tanner, 2008). Dubbed "thrill aficionados" and "mashup artists" by the Center for Culinary Development, they seek out intense flavors and extreme textures (Packaged Facts, 2009b). They're attracted to unusual food forms, flavor profiles tweaked with unexpected or dramatic twists, intense spice levels, and even sound, like the sizzle of a Mongolian barbecue. Interactive eating with mix-ins and add-ons, layers of flavors/crusts, and fusing global cuisines are other important directions.

Gen Yers are the most-frequent snackers, always multi-tasking and on the run, and they'll create a new generation of gourmet snacks, to-go foods, and flavor-enhancing tools, e.g., Stefano Foods' new hand-held *Chicken Parmagiana Stromboli* stuffed breads, Reser's *Stonemill Kitchens* dips, and Sara Lee's *Fresh Ideas* sandwich dressings.

Not surprisingly, this new generation of parents has created the nation's first generation of "Little Foodies" (Sloan, 2009b). With two-thirds of kids/teens eating at home with their family five or more days a week and 96% of households with kids regularly serving ethnic foods, expect kids' flavor preferences to become more sophisticated.

With the number of Gen Yers extremely concerned about the nutrition content of food up 6% last year, also watch for interest in fortified foods targeted to children to escalate (FMI, 2008a). And because Gen Yers have the greatest propensity for making healthy snack choices and the most interest in natural, organic, and "ethical" foods, the demand for healthier kids' snacks will be unprecedented.

Given that the nation's largest baby boom in history is under way, matching up Gen Y parents' attitudes with healthy eating and gourmet taste will provide a win-win proposition. Gerber's new *Graduates for Preschoolers Healthy Meals* deliver such attributes.

5. Little Luxuries

Although many consumers are being forced to cut spending on nonessential food items, they'll continue to splurge on indulgent little luxuries that provide satisfying "me time," remind them of fun times and activities, or contribute to a personally important social cause.

Vacation and destination flavors are coming on strong. VIB Beverages offers a *Vacation in a Bottle* drink. Maui Pancake Company's *Pineapple Coconut Tropical* and *Banana Macadamia Nut* pancake and waffle mixes start your day off with a tropical adventure. Mojito, Margarita, Cabo, and Kona coffee flavors are finding their way into a wide variety of food and beverage categories.

Contrasting flavors will be a key theme for 2009. Toasted sesame and root beer, cayenne and tart cherry, peppercorn mélange and sake, and rosemary and fruit preserves are among McCormick's flavor pairings for 2009.

TCBY introduced a Greek-style *Classic Tart Yogurt* in *Pinkberry* and *Red Mango*; Starbucks offers a *Salt Caramel Hot Chocolate*. Botanical Bakery offers *Tea Cookies* in varieties flavored with cardamom, lavender, cinnamon-basil, and lemon thyme. *Wine Sticks* from Sweet Candy Co. pair chocolate with port, cabernet, and champagne.

From a flavor standpoint, desserts and candies are taking an adventuresome, savory twist, pairing with salts, turmeric, wasabi, basil, cilantro, ginger, rosemary, chipotle, and fennel. In Europe, fine chocolates are infused with vegetables, e.g., cauliflower, tomato jam, and black olives or with cheese or even fresh oysters.

Whether it's cupcakes, doughnuts, cookies, mini-tarts, or gourmet brownies, small desserts have become a big draw in many bakery departments. Individual cupcakes sales jumped 8.7%, snack cakes 6.9%, and dessert cakes 6% for Y/E 5/28/08 (IDDBA, 2008). Tiered cupcakes decorated in colorful butter cream and nostalgic treats such as made-from-scratch versions of *Ding Dongs* are other hot trends. Indulgent treats are also crossing product lines. Dark chocolate is being paired with dried fruit to create indulgent, pop-able snacks. Offaros Baking Co.'s *Java Cookies* bring coffee flavors to the cookie aisle with varieties including *Cappuccino* and *Javaz*.

Many consumers also regard alcoholic beverages as an affordable indulgence. Nearly 85% of consumers have not cut back on

***Dulcet Cuisine's** new range of ketchups appeal to Gen Y's search for more-exotic flavors.*
Photo courtesy of Dulcet Cuisine

***Contrasting flavor combos**—like cayenne and tart cherry—have been identified by McCormick and Co. as a key 2009 trend.* Photo courtesy of McCormick & Co.

their liquor purchases (Brager, 2008). Wine ranked fourth among the top 10 growth categories in terms of unit sales in FDMW, with sales up 4.3% last year (IRI, 2009). Adventurous wine drinkers are driving sales of wines made with obscure grapes and from emerging regions as well as wine in eco-friendly packaging. At the other end of the spectrum, sales of 3-liter boxes of wine jumped 46% last year (Brager, 2008).

Lastly, keep in mind that everyone's indulgences are different. To some, it's having an Angus beef burger or enjoying cave-aged cheese. To others, it may be as simple as a Hershey's chocolate treat; the chocolate maker's sales are expected to rise 2–4% in 2009 (Wells, 2009).

6. Scared Straight

Consumer confidence in food safety has plunged in the past year in the wake of several large-scale incidents, including melamine-contaminated infant formula in China and the U.S. *Salmonella* peanut butter outbreak. In January 2009, just 23% of consumers were confident the food supply was safer than a year ago (UM, 2009). On average, 58% of consumers have changed their buying habits, turning away from products with safety and/or quality issues (Deloitte, 2008).

Consumers' overriding safety concerns include improper food handling (61%), imported food safety (57%), and exposure to foodborne pathogens (55%). Unpasteurized (54%), imported (41%), and GMO-containing foods (33%) are perceived to have the highest safety risks (Gallup, 2008a).

With two-thirds (65%) of consumers extremely concerned about the safety of products produced outside the U.S., particularly those from China (73%), Southeast Asia (51%), and Mexico (49%)—and locally grown viewed as the safest foods by 51% and natural and organic by 44%—look for local sourcing to gain more momentum (Deloitte, 2008; Gallup, 2008a). Country-of-origin labeling will also bolster this trend.

After concerns about universal food safety risks such as product tampering and foodborne pathogens, there are three tiers to ingredient avoidance. Pesticides, antibiotics, hormones, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and cloned animal/fowl products are top-tier concerns among consumers (FMI, 2008a). Sales of hormone– and antibiotic-free products reached $2.4 billion for Y/E 12/27/08 (Nielsen, 2009a). Both Yoplait and Dannon are eliminating milk from cows injected with rBGH (recombinant bovine growth hormone) from their product lines by the end of 2009 (Height, 2009).

Food additives and preservatives might be ranked as second-tier concerns; only 17% of food shoppers consider them to be a serious health hazard; 32% say they are somewhat of a health risk (FMI, 2008a). General no-additive and no-preservative claims are giving way to specific additive claims, e.g., no nitrites/nitrates, artificial colors, sweeteners, etc.

Food allergies and sensitivities represent the third tier of consumer concern. More than three-quarters of consumers indicate they don't buy gluten-free or allergen-free products (IDDBA, 2008). Of those who looked at the ingredient label when buying foods, 4% looked for the presence of food allergens and 6% looked for allergen labeling (IFIC, 2008).

As sales growth in the organic market erodes due to current economic conditions and consumers' definition of organic morphs into "non-processed," "real," "authentic," "handcrafted," and "free of negative ingredients," there will be a strong gravitation to products they equate with these qualities, whether or not the product carries an organic label claim (Hartman, 2008b). Products touting "free-from," "no-junk" and "pure" are likely to meet with growing success among consumers who are steering clear of potentially harmful elements such as hormones, antibiotics, and artificial additives. Finally, new pasteurization and packaging technologies that minimize the need for preservatives (high-pressure post-packaging pasteurization, for example)

***By year's end, Dannon products** will no longer be made with milk from cows treated with recombinant growth hormone.* Photo courtesy of The Dannon Co.

Clearwater *Argentine Scallops* *come from a fishery that has been certified to the Marine Stewardship Council's environmental standard for a well-managed and sustainable fishery.*
Photo courtesy of Clearwater Seafoods Limited Partnership

will be in greater demand (Freedonia, 2008).

7. Changing Shades of Green

As economic pressures continue, the growth rates of some sustainable categories, including green products and organics, have begun to slow. Determining what issues matter most to consumers will help identify ethical products and positionings that will weather the economic storm and gain momentum in the years ahead.

The number of Americans who say they *almost always* or *regularly* buy green products remained unchanged from 2007 to 2008 at 36% (Mintel, 2009b). According to the Hartman Group, sustainability is not a word to use in consumer marketing messages (Hartman, 2009). Half (54%) of consumers claim some familiarity with the term, but most cannot define it appropriately upon probing.

Although FDMx sales of UPC-coded foods labeled organic rose 16% to $4.9 billion for Y/E 12/27/08, growth slowed to just 4% for the last 12 weeks of 2008 (Nielsen, 2009a). In contrast, FDMx sales of food and beverage products carrying a natural claim reached $22.3 billion, up 10% for Y/E 12/27/08 (Nielsen, 2009a).

Consumers have shifted their organic spending to categories that are most closely tied to freshness or health, including fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, and milk. More highly processed organic foods will be more likely to be bypassed in 2009. Hartman experts believe this trend will continue and suggest that organic retailers re-think their product assortments, space allocation, merchandising, and promotions (Hartman, 2009).

A clear hierarchy of natural, organic, USDA organic, and local claims has recently developed for both consumer products and restaurant menus. A natural claim is very/somewhat important to 32% of consumers, locally grown to 23%, USDA organic to 19%, and organic to 15% (Hartman, 2008b). In restaurants, natural is extremely/somewhat important to 65% and organic is viewed that way by 48% of consumers (Technomic, 2007). "Humane treatment certified" is another descriptor that resonates with consumers; it is very or somewhat important to 40% of all shoppers and to 55% of those who are aware of the term (IDDBA, 2008). Many retailers are now carrying eggs with a "certified humane raised and handled" seal. Whole Foods stores are developing their own "animal compassionate" standards. With People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) calling off their truce with McDonald's over the most-humane way to kill a chicken, the issue will move further into the limelight.

Lastly, there has been a significant increase in home gardening and shopping for food at farmers markets. More than 43 million households plan to grow their own fruits, vegetables, herbs, and berries this year, up 19% from 2008 (NGA, 2009). Better taste was the reason cited by 58%, saving money was cited by 54%, and 49% like knowing the products are safe. The incidence of home canning and freezing is expected to increase accordingly.

8. Me M.D.

The high cost of prescription drugs and growing concern over the safety of both prescription and over-the-counter drugs has prompted Americans to take health into their own hands, creating a unique window of opportunity for functional foods. Two-thirds (66%) of consumers made a strong effort or some effort to eat fortified foods in 2008 (MSI, 2008). Half (53%) made a strong effort to get more calcium, 42% to get more omega-3s, 40% to increase vitamin D, and 38% to increase B vitamins.

Interest in naturally functional foods and whole food nutrition is likely to be one of the strongest health trends for the next 10 years. Blending naturally "high in" nutrient foods to obtain high-antioxidant products such as *V-8 Fusion* or combining foods naturally high in phytochemicals and nutrients such as *Green Giant's Healthy Vision* or *Immunity Boost* frozen vegetables is a smart strategy. Sports beverages that deliver electrolytes naturally through blending represent another new functional direction.

The incidence of high blood pressure increased in 2008, and the American Heart Assn. is focusing on reducing heart attacks/strokes in higher-risk ethnic populations as well as on children's heart health. Thus, more-specific heart health products and lower-sodium foods will be in high demand. Concerns about circulation, artery health, and anti-platelet activity may lead to new opportunities for functional foods. Watch for flavanols to emerge as the next hot heart-health ingredient.

Reducing body fat is the next mainstream market in weight control, and products that help build lean body mass and/or increase muscle mass/tone, e.g., conjugated linoleic acid, will be viewed as the next "fountain of youth." A growing number of consumers—33% in 2008—believe that calories from fat are the most likely to cause weight gain (IFIC, 2008).

Two-thirds (67%) of mothers with children ages 12 and younger monitor their child's diet very closely, up from 56% in 2004 (MSI, 2008). More than half (56%) of moms report making a strong effort to limit caffeine. For sugar, the total is 37%, high fructose corn syrup, also 37%, *trans* fat 36%, low/no-calorie sweeteners 35%, artificial flavors 27%, and artificial colors, also 27%. Ingredients they're trying to increase include whole grains 45%, calcium 38%, vitamins/minerals 36%, and vitamins D and C, 33% each.

The recognition of serious risk factors in children by health professionals and parents will create a new demand for naturally preventative and functional foods for children (HealthFocus, 2007). With a tripling of high blood pressure in children over the past decade and one in eight kids already having two or more risk factors for heart disease, the American Academy of Pediatrics has mandated that pediatricians begin monitoring calcium and blood pressure at age 2 and complete a lipid profile between the ages of 2 and 8 (AAP, 2008).

Lastly, restaurants may be one of the largest new healthy food opportunities. ACF chefs named nutrition/health—including low-fat, lower-calorie, reduced-sodium, high-fiber, and antioxidants—as the top culinary theme for 2009, followed by gluten-free/food allergy consciousness (NRA, 2008).

Products like* V8 V-Fusion *juices* *that are high in antioxidants deliver benefits more consumers are seeking.

9. Thirsting for More

Americans continue to move away from sugary soft drinks in favor of bottled water, energy drinks, and teas. Sports drinks ranked No. 1 in unit sales in FDMW for YE 12/7/2008 (IRI, 2009). The overall market for functional beverages is projected to grow to $34 billion by 2010 (Vosburgh, 2008).

Carbonated beverages suffered the largest sales decline in 2008, down 4.5% overall, while diet drinks remained steady. Bottled water sales fell by 1.7%, likely due to a combination of both economic and environmental issues (IRI, 2009).

High-end waters with exotic sources and upscale packaging remain a strong market segment (BMC, 2008). Super-satiating waters are also holding their high appeal. Upscale and exotic beers are finding a place on the table at white tablecloth restaurants and night clubs.

According to ACF chefs, the hottest trend-setting beverages in restaurants for 2009 are specialty iced tea (e.g., Thai-style, Southern/sweet, flavored), green tea, organic coffee, Espresso/specialty coffee, and flavored/enhanced water (NRA, 2008). Micro-distilled/brewed, artisan, organic, and specialty are key buzz words for alcoholic beverages. One-third (33%) of chefs believe that mixologists and signature cocktails will be the No. 1 trend in this area, and 26% say functional cocktails made with a full serving of fruits/vegetables or superfruits.

Red, green, and rooibos teas are gaining in popularity, e.g., Starbucks' *Vanilla Red Tea Latte* and *Tropical Smoothies* green tea–based smoothies (Moore, 2009). Children's iced tea products such as The Republic of Tea's *Little Citizens' Herb Tea* are coming on strong, as well. Most important, the growth in tea sales, now a $3+ billion market, is due to new tea drinkers rather than tea drinkers upgrading to premium products (Mellgren, 2008).

Not surprisingly, although daily consumption of premium coffee is at an all-time high, with 17% of consumers drinking it in 2008, many are turning to their own coffee makers as a more-economical way to get their premium brews (Gallagher, 2009).

Although slowing somewhat from previous years, energy drinks are still growing in double-digit figures. Packaged Facts projected that the energy drink segment will surpass $9 billion by 2011 (Crawshaw, 2009). Energy shots and long-lasting energy drinks remain a hot trend. Vitality drinks for older adults remain an untapped market.

Despite growing concern over their calorie levels, fruit beverages still dominate the kids' beverage market with a 64% share, followed by dairy drinks at 12%, bottled waters 11%, and sports beverages 7% (BMC, 2008).

Tropicana's new low-sugar orange juice with 50% of the calories should attract those concerned about the high calorie levels of juices. Coke and Pepsi have already rolled out drinks containing rebaudioside A (reb A), a derivative of the Stevia plant. Pepsi is also launching *Pepsi Natural*, made with all-natural ingredients, including lightly sparkling water, natural sugar, natural caramel, and kola nut extract.

Ronzoni Bistro *pasta in a pouch makes preparing a single serving of pasta a simple matter.* Photo courtesy of New World Pasta

Little Citizens' Herb Teas *are new from the Republic of Tea.*
Photo courtesy of The Republic of Tea

10. Form Follows Function

The tight economy is causing many consumers to trade down on form and function. While frozen meals/entrée sales fell 3.2%, shelf-stable dinners were down 4.5%, refrigerated entrees down 3.6%, and refrigerated lunches down 5.3% in FDMW for the first two quarters of 2008 vs the same period in 2007 (IRI, 2008). Meanwhile, dry packaged dinners made the top 10 highest-growth list, up +2.7% for the same time period (IRI, 2008).

Four in 10 shoppers (40%) purchased more canned, frozen, and boxed foods in 2008 (FMI, 2008a). Canned *Spam* dollar sales climbed 14% in 2008; other sales-growth categories included canned vegetables, up 9%, and frozen vegetables, up 7% (Nielsen, 2009b).

Pouches are an increasingly popular packaging option. Pouched tuna is the primary driver of growth in that category, accounting for more than 10% of sales (Ramseyer, 2007). *Ronzoni Bistro* pasta is packed in convenient, microwaveable single-serve pouches. Kraft's *Stove Top Quick Cups* allow workers another option for a hearty lunch on the go. Asian Sun's *Liquid Green Tea* in packets eliminates the need to dispose of messy tea bags at the office.

With consumers' grocery shopping trips falling steadily over the past three years to 1.9 times per week in 2008, shelf life takes on even greater importance. The Garlic Co.'s new whole peeled fresh garlic in vacuum packs of three individual garlic cloves has an 8-week shelf life. C.H. Robinson/River Ranch Fresh Foods' new *Fresh 'n Easy Quick Steam* vegetable side dishes with blue cheese and other sauces have a 17-day shelf life; a new steam-valve cooking system preserves nutrient levels and allows for cooking times of under 3 min.

With more consumers cooking from scratch, products that make the task easier still have high appeal. The Wilcox Marketing Group's *Potato Jazz* allows fresh, seasoned potatoes to steam in their microwave tray in 5 min.

The move to home cooking has also spurred sales of home canning and freezing supplies like jars, bags, and containers, which jumped 11% during the 8-week period ended 2/21/09 (Gregory, 2009). »»

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Because consumers on restricted budgets are wary of experimenting, new twists on the familiar remain a strong marketing draw. For example, *Kraft Mac & Cheese Crackers, Bud Light Lime,* and Burger King's *Apple Fries* were among the food items in the 10 Most Memorable New Products of 2008 listing assembled by public relations firm Schneider Associates (Schneider, 2009). Keebler's *Flip Sides* pretzel crackers have a cracker on one side and pretzel on the other.

Whether it's driven by boredom, convenience, safety, or economy, consumers are seeking a variety of new—and sometimes tried and true—product and packaging forms to meet their changing needs. Manufacturers who deliver convenient and efficient solutions without a premium price are sure to grab consumers' attention. **FT**

***A. Elizabeth Sloan**, a Professional Member of IFT and Contributing Editor of* Food Technology, *is President, Sloan Trends Inc., 2958 Sunset Hills, Suite 202, Escondido, CA 92025 (sloan@sloantrend.com).*

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